The Builder.

No. CCCLXXXIII.

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1850.

THE two reports of the committee appointed to consider all matters relating to the building required for the intended Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations have been published, and will be found to confirm generally the information we gave some time ago. Printed copies of the reports have already been extensively circulated, and, to continue our record, we must confine ourselves to the pith of them. After acknowledging the material assistance they have derived from the designs submitted, the committee say they have nevertheless arrived at the unanimous conclusion, that able and admirable as many of them appear to be, there is yet no single one so accordant with the peculiar objects in view, either in the principle or detail of its arrangement, as to warrant them in recommending it for adoption. They have, accordingly, prepared a plan themselves, and, in doing so, have been governed mainly by three considerations* :—

1. The provisional nature of the building.

2. The advisability of constructing it, as far as possible, in such a form as to be available, with least sacrifice of labour and material, for other purposes, so soon as its original one shall have been fulfilled, thus insuring a minimum ultimate cost.

3. Extreme simplicity, demanded by the short time in which the work must be completed.

For the arrangements of the plan they rely for effect on honesty of construction, vastness of dimension, and fitness of each part to its end.

The principal points of excellence they have endeavoured to attain are, they say,—

1. Economy of construction.

2. Facilities for the reception, classification, and display of goods.

3. Facilities for the circulation of visitors.

4. Arrangement for grand points of view.

5. Centralization of supervision: and

6. Some striking feature to exemplify the present state of the science of construction in this country.

As to this last point they say,—

"In order that the building, in which England invites the whole world to display their richest productions, may afford, at least in one point, a grandeur not incommensurate with the occasion, we propose, by a dome of light sheet iron, 200 feet in diameter, to produce an effect at once striking and admirable. From calculations which have been made of the cost of so grand a hall, we have reason to expect that it may be executed for a sum not greatly exceeding the cost of the simplest form of roof likely to be adopted to cover the same area.

It is to be borne in mind that a considerable amount of any such difference may be recovered, should this portion of the building be converted hereafter to other purposes, which is more than probable. This vast dome it is proposed to light mainly from one circle of light in its centre, and thus the sculpture will be pleasingly and suitably lit."

The construction of this dome, 200 feet in diameter, will be no joke. We may remind the reader that it will be double the size of our St. Paul's dome, which is about 112 feet in diameter. The dome of St. Peter's, at Rome, is 139 feet in diameter; and that of the Pantheon 142 feet.

This central hall will be a polygon of sixteen sides, four of which will open into gardens reserved around it. Its main walls will be of brick, and about 60 feet high.

According to the committee, our continental neighbours have especially distinguished themselves by compositions of the utmost taste and learning, worthy of enduring execution,—examples of what might be done in the architectural illustration of the subject, when viewed in its highest aspect, and "at all events exhibiting features of grandeur, arrangement, and grace."

"Amongst these several classes of design the practical character of our own countrymen, as might have been expected, has been remarkably illustrated in some very striking and simple methods suited to the temporary purposes of the building, due attention having been paid to the pecuniary means allotted to this part of the undertaking. The principle of suspension has been applied in a single tent of iron sheeting, covering an area averaging 2,200 feet by 400 feet, by a lengthened ridge, or in separate tents on isolated supports. Others display the solution of this problem by the Chapter-house principle, and a few by the umbrella or circular locomotive engine-house system of railway stations, either with a central column or groups of columns sustaining domes or roofs to the extent of 400 feet diameter.

Grandeur and simplicity of distribution are carried out with great architectural effect in other compositions, and the general arrangement by columnar supports has been also variously and elegantly developed. The system of iron roofing, with all the architectural powers of which that material is susceptible, has been adopted by some with signal enterprise, ingenuity, and power.

In another class of design the authors have viewed with enthusiasm the great occasion and object of the proposed Exhibition, and have waved all considerations of expense. They have indulged their imaginations, and employed the resources of their genius and learning in the composition of arrangements which present the utmost grandeur and beauty of architecture, suited to a permanent palace of science and art. These, as addressed to the architectural student, are of the highest value, reminding him of all the conditions of his art,—the Egyptian hypostyle, the Roman thermæ, or the Arabian or Saracenic inventions. And, though their expense has placed them beyond reach, they cannot fail to inspire and elevate the treatment of the reality. They, at all events, confer great obligations on the lovers of the fine arts, for the authors have evidently felt, that, if one of the results to be expected from the proposed Exhibition may be to prove that the simplest object of ingenuity and skill should not be devoid of some of the attractions of taste, the building itself ought to be an illustration of that important principle."

Considering this to be an occasion upon which the greatest amount of intellectual and commercial ingenuity should be called out, and that the ability of constructors should be put in requisition, the committee recommend as the best means of enlisting the services of intelligent and enterprising contractors (as we said they would), that when they have prepared such working drawings and specifications as may be necessary, invitations for tenders to execute works in accordance should be issued, requesting from competitors, in addition, "such suggestions and modifications, accompanied with estimates of cost, as might possibly become the means of effecting a considerable reduction upon the general expense."

Such tenders will accordingly be invited, and the result must be waited for.*

The committee give two lists of competitors selected; the first consisting of seventy names,† as being entitled "to honourable and favourable mention, on account of architectural merit, ingenious construction, or disposition, or for graceful arrangement of plan;" and the second containing eighteen names, selected from the preceding, "for further higher honorary distinctions, on account of their designs of distinguished merit, showing very noble qualities of construction, disposition, and taste."

We give the second list first:—

C. Badger, architect, Paris; Thomas Bellamy, architect, London; J. H. Bertram, C.E., Reading; A. Botrele, architect, Paris; J. Cailloux, architect, Paris; Henri Van Cleemputte, architect, France; Cremont, architect, Paris; A. Delange, architect, Paris; A. G. le Dreux, Clermont, France; M. G. Pétar Van Elven, architect, Amsterdam; J. Henard, architect, Paris; H. Horeau, architect, Paris; C. Huchon, Paris; H. le Pâtre, architect, Paris; Casimir Pétiaux, Paris; Paul Sprénger, architect, Vienna; Richard and Thomas Turner, Hammersmith Works, Dublin; and Véron, of Paris.

And of these they point particular attention to the designs accompanied by models, "of Monsieur Hector Horeau, architect, of Paris; and of Messrs. Turner, of Dublin, as evincing most daring and ingenious disposition and construction."

The following are the remainder of the seventy:—

C. B. Allen, W. Allingham and Todd, W. Bardwell, H. Ashton, P. P. Bale (four designs), R. Bell, H. Bouse, R. Brandon, F. Brown, J. B. Bunning, G. A. Burn, H. Case, J. Charpentier, Paris; J. P. Cluysenaar, architect of King of the Belgians, Brussels; J. W. Conrad, Holland; H. Courtney, W. Cruikshank, C. Downes, A. Durand, France; — Dusillion, Paris; H. Fevre, Paris; S. C. Fripp, A. Gearing, Eugene Godebeuf, Paris; J. T. Harrison, T. Hayes, J. Imray, Ch. Schœch Jaquet, Geneva; — Jaulle, Calais; Louis Kahne, Brunswick; J. T. Knowles, M. Laves, architect of the King, Hanover; W. B. Lewes, C. C. Nelson, C. F. Nepveu, Versailles; — Pallard, Paris; H. S. Ridley, J. B. Roberts, A. Rosengarten, Hamburg; W. Russell, H. Savage, J. P. Seddon, A. Slater, Elève, de Mons. Clursenaar; Smallman Smith, C. H. Smith, H. Sumners and Wallis, F. Tyerman, jun., J. Watson, W. H. Wontner, and T. Worthington.

It will be observed, that of the thirty-eight designs submitted by foreigners, thirty receive (and doubtless deserve) honourable mention, while of the more than 230 contributed by England, Ireland, and Scotland, only thirty-eight are so distinguished. And beyond this it will be noted with dissatisfaction by many, perhaps, although the dissatisfaction will arise from very different causes in different minds, that, with the exception of one from London, one from Reading, and one from Dublin, *all*

* The building will be about 2,300 feet long, rather more than 600 feet across, and the roofed area will probably extend to about 900,000 square feet. In the centre of the south front, opposite Prince's-gate, will be placed the principal entrance and offices. There will be three other great entrances in the centre of the other side of the building. Gangways 48 feet wide, clear and uninterrupted, excepting by seats, will connect the entrances, and at the intersection of these main lines it is proposed to form the grand circular hall. The area will be covered with a simple iron roofing, of 48 feet span, running from end to end of the building, supported by hollow iron columns, resting on brick piers, and covered very probably with boarding and slate. The highest of the roof covering the main avenue will be 64 feet. The lowest line of the main roofing will be 36 feet high, (100 feet) and the clear height of the central gangway will be about 70 feet. The floor will, for by far the greater portion of the area, be formed of boarding laid on joists and sleeper-walls. The external enclosures will in all cases be constructed of brick. The light will be principally derived from skylights.

* The whole building must be finished and delivered up by January 1, 1851. Contractors will, we understand, be required to tender on two systems, one involving a resumption, after the termination of the Exhibition, of property in the materials supplied by them, and the other proceeding on the supposition that Her Majesty's Commissioners become dead proprietors, and take the full benefit of subsequent disposal of the building upon themselves.

† Including two firms; each name counted.

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